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SIPDIS

FAA LONDON FOR JOSEPH TEIXERA
STATE FOR EB/TRA FOR M.WALKLET AND S.PARSON
USEU FOR J.KESSLER

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: AIRCRAFT NOISE: DUTCH PARLIAMENT RAISES NEW
CONCERNS ABOUT SCHIPHOL

1. Summary. The Dutch parliament is reviewing aircraft noise levels in response to pressure from communities in the area of Amsterdam Schiphol Airport. Sleep disturbances have increased as the 5th runway has come on line. It remains to be seen whether or not the study will lead to a change in regulations, but it is likely that if the debate were to continue, it will pose a challenge to advocates of further airport expansion. End Summary.

2. A study of airport noise commissioned by the Dutch Second Chamber revealed a significant increase in sleep disturbances as a result of airport expansion. The findings may lead to changes in limits set for air travel at Amsterdam's airport. The Second Chamber is frequently the target of lobbying by city councils in townships surrounding Amsterdam Schiphol Airport who have opposed plans to expand the airport. The latest study, conducted by the Royal Institute of Health and Environmental, measured the degree of sleep disturbance among a sample population. It found a significant increase since the 2002 opening of the airport's fifth runway. Developers of the new runway originally claimed its addition to the airport would reduce sleep disturbances in the region. The findings of the environment and health study will be paired with an economic impact study, and the package will be presented to the Second Chamber for review. The Parliament will then make a recommendation for whether or not to change standing regulations on air traffic. Dutch regulations set a ceiling for the total number of "sleep-disturbed residents" in the Schiphol area, in addition to limiting night flights and specifying flight paths,

3. Maryanne Heijman of the Environmental Division of the Civil Aviation Authority said the Transport Ministry hopes economic factors will receive full consideration as the Second Chamber considers the noise abatement issue. Heijman predicts that there will be no change in the regulations governing noise restrictions until at least 2006, but she does expect the discussion to continue within the Chamber, among community organizations, and in the press. News of the study has put the issue back on the front pages of Dutch newspapers.

4. Comment: The airport's rapid growth over the past 10 years, coupled with industrial development in the "Amsterdam Airport Area", are significant drivers of the Netherlands' economy. Schiphol just finished a major expansion phase and has further plans for increasing commercial air business in the near future. The Ministry of Transport and its private sector allies argue that continued development of the airport -- services and facilities -- is key to the country's future competitiveness and economic growth. The noise pollution issue could undermine their expansion campaign. But whether or not it will reignite debate over aircraft standards (read hushkits) remains to be seen. End Comment.
RUSSEL